

Hobbies

A change of pace in commemorative plans

By Roger Boye

Government coiners may be working overtime this summer to gear up for still more 1992 commemorative programs.

Under legislation signed last month by President Bush, Uncle Sam is to issue a 1992 silver dollar depicting the White House and three coin types memorializing the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' voyage to the New World. But the United States Mint has yet to unveil coin

designs or announce ordering details.

Federal workers already are selling three 1992 coin types to mark U.S. participation in the 1992 Olympic games. That program has garnered praise in the hobby press, thanks to the handsome coin motifs selected last year in a national competition.

Government artists will have much less time to design the new commemoratives. In the past, tight production deadlines often have resulted in poor-looking coins.

Congress took nearly three years to approve the Columbus-coin legislation, in part because of a debate over an unrelated bill that would mandate new designs for circulating coins. Earlier this year, the U.S. House defeated the redesign proposal.

Meanwhile, some hobby experts are criticizing yet another bill in Congress that would establish a 14-coin program to honor the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. Sales supposedly would raise as much as \$100 million for the staging of the games and training athletes.